

**JAKI IRVINE**

*If the Ground Should Open...*

Frith Street Gallery, Golden Square

3 March – 13 April 2017

On Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, a group of Irish nationalists proclaimed the establishment of the Irish Republic and, along with some 1,600 followers, staged a rebellion against the British government in Ireland. The rebels seized prominent buildings in Dublin and clashed with British troops. Within a week, the insurrection had been suppressed and more than 2,000 people were dead or injured. The leaders of the rebellion soon were executed. Initially, there was little support from the Irish people for the Easter Rising; however, public opinion later shifted and the executed leaders were hailed as martyrs. In 1921, a treaty was signed that in 1922 established the Irish Free State, which eventually became the modern-day Republic of Ireland.

*If the Ground Should Open...* is a major new multi-channel video work made to commemorate the Easter Rising. The piece takes as a point of departure Irvine's 2013 novel 'Days of Surrender', which focuses on Elizabeth O'Farrell and Julia Grenan. These were two of more than a hundred women who were ready to die or kill for the possibility of a different Ireland but whose stories were all but written out of official Irish history, consigned to the margins as the narrative was masculinised.

This video and sound installation uses the women's names as 'the ground' of a score for nine musicians. The eleven tracks were composed by Irvine using the *canntaireachd* system – originally developed as an oral scoring system for Scottish Highland pipes. The basic musical motif in classical piping (*piobaireachd*) is called 'the ground' of the piece, which is then built upon with additional notes and melodies. In *If the Ground Should Open...* the names of women involved in the 1916 Rising form the ground. In this way they are performed and remembered. The project was also developed from infamous leaked conversation between two bankers at the Anglo-Irish Bank during the financial crisis of 2008.

Commenting on her work Irvine said "With *If the Ground Should Open...* the legacy of 1916 is reconsidered in the light of a contemporary Ireland broken by corporate greed. Both the past and the present are reflected through a lens that is complicated, joyful, furious and hopeful". Irvine also goes on to acknowledge the contribution of the performers to the project: "All of the performers brought their own extraordinary knowledge, generosity and musicality to this project and further developed it through personal interpretation and improvisation". The nine performers include on vocals Louise Phelan, Cats Irvine and Cherry Smyth; bagpipes Hilary Knox; piano Izumi Kimura; violin Liz McClaren; cello Jane Hughes; double bass Aura Stone and drums Sarah Grimes.

**This work was originally commissioned by The Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.**

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Jaki Irvine currently lives and works in Dublin and Mexico City. Solo exhibitions include: Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (1999 & 2005); Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, Germany (1998); Delfina Project Space, London (2001); Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2004), Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. In 1995 Irvine was included in the seminal exhibition of Young British Artists, General Release, at the Venice Biennale, and she represented Ireland at the 1997 Biennale. Irvine is represented in the collections of IMMA, the Irish Arts Council, Tate Modern, FRAC and in numerous other collections, both public and private.